

REMARKS

Upon entry of this amendment, claims 1, 2, 6-8, 10-14, and 16-21 are all the claims pending in the application. Claims 3 and 9 have been canceled by this amendment.

Initially, regarding the status of the Office Action mailed on March 3, 2011, Applicants note that a brief telephone interview was conducted on March 21, 2011 between Applicants' representative and the Examiner in which the Examiner confirmed that the Office Action mailed on March 3, 2011 was a non-final Office Action. In this regard, the Examiner stated that the indication on the Office Action Summary form that the Office Action was a final Office Action was an inadvertent error. It is noted that the USPTO's PAIR system correctly identifies the Office Action as being a non-final Office Action.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 3 and 9 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

By this amendment, Applicants note that claim 1 has been amended so as to incorporate all of the features of claim 3, and that claim 7 has been amended to incorporate all of the features of claim 9. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claims 1 and 7 are now in condition for allowance. As noted above, claims 3 and 9 have been canceled.

II. Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1, 2, 6, 14 and 16 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Stava (US 6,501,049) in view of Oku (US 3,376,473), and further in view of

Shintani et al. (US 6,255,618) and Stava (US 5,001,326); and claims 7, 8, 10, 12 and 13 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kawai (JP 1-266966) in view of Shintani et al. (US 6,255,618) and Stava (US 5,001,326).

Regarding claims 1 and 7, as noted above, these claims have been amended by incorporating therein the allowable features of claims 3 and 9, respectively. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claims 1 and 7 are in condition for allowance, an indication of which is kindly requested.

Regarding claims 2, 6, 8, 10, 12-14 and 16-21, Applicants note that claims 2, 6, 14 and 16 depend from claim 1, and claims 8, 10, 12, 13 and 17-21 depend from claim 7. Accordingly, claims 2, 6, 8, 10, 12-14 and 16-21 are considered to be patentable at least by virtue of their dependency.

III. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited.

If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may best be resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

Atsuhiko KAWAMOTO et al.

/Kenneth W. Fields/

By 2011.05.20 12:06:06 -04'00'

Kenneth W. Fields
Registration No. 52,430
Attorney for Applicants

KWF/krq
Washington, D.C. 20005-1503
Telephone (202) 721-8200
Facsimile (202) 721-8250
May 20, 2011